

## **A Study on Experiential Marketing of an Underground Tourist Attraction in Bangkok**

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### **Abstract**

Maintaining consumer loyalty/revisit to a company, which leads to revisit or repurchase purpose, is a critical element in today's highly competitive market climate. To ensure long-term market growth in every industry, businesses must first consider their consumers' desires and then build unique brands. As consequence, if the tourism sector of the country is developing very well, it can help and implement other sectors of the country at the same time. The primary purpose of this research is to study the Experiential Marketing of an underground tourist attraction in Bangkok, Thailand. The objectives of this study are to analyze the influence of experiential marketing on emotion, to identify the influence of experiential quality on experiential satisfaction, to examine the influence of emotion on experiential satisfaction, and to investigate the influence of experiential satisfaction on revisit intention. The data collected at a specified time from February 23, 2021, to March 10, 2021. The questionnaires were hand distributed on weekdays and weekends from 12.00 pm to 6.00 pm at around Siam Square One, Siam Centre, and Siam Paragon in Bangkok by using five-point Likert scale survey questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed until the sample size was achieved. After the data collecting process, the researchers analyzed all primary data by utilizing the Statistical program. The descriptive analysis and inferential analysis including linear regression analysis were used to test all the hypotheses. According to the study's findings, experiential marketing (Feel, Sense, Think, Act, Relate) influence is statistically relevant to emotion. Then, experiential quality and emotion also influence experiential satisfaction. Moreover, experiential satisfaction positively influences revisit intention. This study has both time and place limitations which can be difficult to obtain relevant information and difficult to compile data. The value of this study is to promote marketing strategies and to pursue the visitors of Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World.

**Keywords:** Experiential Marketing, Underground Tourist Attraction, Covid-19 Pandemic, Customer Experience.

### **1. Introduction**

Nowadays, the swiftly growing consumer market and their beliefs towards advertising give a new challenge to the marketer to find new modern methods to capture the intention of the audience. If marketers think about only traditional marketing during these years, their business will be late behind in the market. Experiential marketing is one of the modern successful marketing methods that focus on customer experience. Experiential marketing provides a sensory experience, cognitive-emotional performance, imaginary perception and rational value to the customers during the marketing process. The implementation stage of experiential

marketing experiences providing to customers by using 5 senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and feel. By using experiential marketing, marketers can provide the value of products or services that customers expected. Therefore, in these days most of the marketer tries to launch their product or service before the product or service distribute in the market to catch the customer mind. And also, the hospitality and tourism industry start using these marketing tactics widely now (Datta, 2017).

As long as experiential marketing becomes more and more beneficial in many industries, it also can be regarded as an important weapon in the tourism industry. Furthermore, the foreign currency of Thailand mainly depends on the tourist industry and so, this industry has been seriously affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore, the economic income slightly dropped. Therefore, both the reverent authority organizations and professional marketers of tourism are trying to apply this new marketing strategy instead of using traditional marketing. Utilizing this tactic as a competitive advantage, not only the popular tourist destinations but also unwell known tourist destination places might become popular in near future.

Especially for tourist attractions, the firms can persuade the tourists or the visitors through experiential marketing. That means that the marketers can create the virtual events and/or promotions that introduce their tourist sites as a taste of sample, leading to getting the tourist attention to come and visit. Moreover, travel blogs and vlogs can also provide a part of experiential marketing because the visitors can get experience through that Vlogs. If the vloggers or celebrities can create great quality vlogs, which offer the feeling of real taste, these videos and/or blogs can draw attention not only to their fans but also to the new visitors.

This research explores how much advantageous can get from applying the new modern concept of experiential marketing in the underground tourist attraction of Thailand. Therefore, the researcher selects sea life Bangkok as an example of an underground tourist attraction. Because one of the parts for the tourist attraction in Thailand is Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World which is located at Siam Paragon shopping mall in Bangkok and considering that the Sea Life Bangkok is the larger aquarium in South East Asia. And the span of an area of over 10,000 square meters with hundreds of fishes.

### *1.1 Statement of Problem*

To do marketing in hospitality and tourism industry is not the same as like other industries because their main product is like giving the service to the customers. In previous years, they use both traditional and digital marketing but the experiential marketing is rarely used in this industry. When the start of the covid-19 pandemic, the traditional marketing methods have many barriers for the marketers to promote their tourist attraction place. Therefore, they need to apply the concept of experiential marketing.

In the 21 centuries, every industry needed to survive in the competitive world. If they cannot extend and promote their market, their businesses will be shrunk in different ways and it is very difficult for them to survive in the market for a long time. Therefore, marketers need to consider to take competitive advantages by using alternative marketing theories to compete with other competitors. Experiential marketing is a new modern technique for marketing profession during these years and some industries achieved their goals by using experiential marketing concepts. There are many difficult issues also in tourism industry of Thailand in 2020 and Thailand economy mainly depend on tourism sector. So, experts of tourism industry in Thailand have a

big issue to solve these problems urgently to maintain the economy of Thailand. By using experiential marketing concepts, these experts may overcome this crisis and it may be alternative way of solution for current problems of an underground tourist attraction of Bangkok.

### *1.2 Research Objectives*

RO1. To analyze the influence of experiential marketing on emotion.

RO2. To identify the influence of experiential quality on experiential satisfaction.

RO3. To examine the influence of emotion on experiential satisfaction.

RO4. To investigate the influence of experiential satisfaction on revisit intention.

### *1.3 Theory*

#### *1.3.1 Experiential marketing*

Pine and Gilmore (1998) indicated that experiential marketing emerges when a business creates a stage with services and uses goods as props for customers. When services are intangible and products are tangible, experiences are memorable. Moreover, four main elements of experiential marketing were developed: (1) an emphasis on consumer experiences; (2) a concentration on purchase as a holistic experience; (3) an assumption that consumers are logical and emotional beings; and (4) a knowledge that methods and instruments are assorted.

The concept of strategic experience modules (SEMs) that administrators can use to develop suitable kinds of customer interactions for their customers was suggested by Schmitt (1999a; 1999b). In experiential marketing, the experiential modules to be handled include sensory experiences (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), imaginative cognitive experiences (THINK), physical experiences, activities and lifestyles (ACT), and perceptions of life experiences arising from a reference community or culture (RELATE). Thus why this can be supposed that experiential marketing aims to build experiences having holistic integration at the same time.

##### *1.3.1.1 Sense*

Sensory experiences are created through sight, sound, touch and smell. Then, the sense is the primary reaction in an experiential event where one person participates (Tsaur, 2006).

##### *1.3.1.2 Feel*

One of the basic concepts of life is to pursue satisfaction and to avoid pain or, more commonly, to feel good and avoid feeling bad. The feelings are the ones that appear during consumption are most effective, and the contacts and interactions are the product of intense emotions, and they develop throughout.

##### *1.3.1.3 Think*

Schmitt (1999a; 1999b) suggested that Think marketing contributes to intelligence to develop cognitive, problem-solving interactions that creatively engage customers. Moreover, think marketing appeals to the inductive and deductive thought of customers through industry, excitement and aggression.

##### *1.3.1.4 Act*

Schmitt (1999a; 1999b) proposes that even by targeting their physical encounters, representative new ways of doing things, alternative lifestyles and interactions, ACT marketing enriches the lives of consumers. Life-style and behavioural improvements are often more motivational, encouraging and emotional, and often inspired by role models.

##### *1.3.1.5 Relate*

Relate initiatives attract the desire of the individual for self-improvement (e.g., a potential “ideal self” to which he or she wishes to relate), appeal to the need for individual others to be observed favourably and relate the individual to the social system abroad.

### *1.3.2 Experiential Quality*

Experiential quality operationalization requires a visitor’s affective reaction to the psychological value they want from a visiting experience (Chen, 2011). According to (Brady, 2001), the assessment of experience quality focuses on the reflection of the attitude of the customer and psychological towards the technological and functional advantage of the external service environment provides to the customer. Besides, experiential quality refers to the quality performance of the attribute level in the sense of tourism, where experiential quality refers to the emotional outcomes acquired by the involvement of the visitor in the tourism operation (Chen, 2011). Concentrating on nature-based tourism experiences, the comprehensive perception of aesthetics, and operationalizes as six experiential qualities: cleanliness, scenery, harmony, architecture, and genuineness.

Furthermore, central experiential qualities, especially harmony and architecture are the main factors of numerous experiential consequences over the perceived quality, satisfaction and intent to suggest to the others. Furthermore, the findings from observational tourism study on aesthetic principles regarding events in nature and landscape preferences note that scenery (Chi, 2008), and cleanliness (Hazen, 2009). Besides, “genuineness” or unique encounters are stressed in many experiential struts connected to the senses of touch, smell and taste, such as enjoying unique accommodation or sampling local food and beverages (Chi, 2008).

### *1.3.3 Experiential Satisfaction*

The influence of the concept of experiential satisfaction examines service satisfaction and customer control under certain circumstances. According to Oliver (1980), the fact that satisfaction is an important component of inexperience, too because of being based on product or service satisfaction. Then, the first assessment after purchasing or the wonderful experience of the new transaction experience was customer satisfaction from one transaction. Then, the impact caused by the product was very much connected to satisfaction after purchasing experience. Moreover, experience satisfaction represents the satisfaction perceived from the content of the service relevant to such communications through an experience perspective.

### *1.3.4 Revisit Intention*

Oliver (1997) defined the behavioural intention among the customer’s repurchase and word-of-mouth intention as “a situation where everything in behaviour is associated.” The definition of purpose to revisit is derived from the intention to perform. Therefore, one of the most significant inspirations that have influenced a customer’s revisit intention is possibly satisfaction. Moreover, it is quite important to satisfy customers because it directly affects the expectation and intent of the consumer repurchase decision to revisit the site. Then, satisfaction affects the tendency to revisit. There is, however, a lack of theoretical and empirical evidence that can relate to the background of the intention to revisit a tourism site.

## **2. Literature review**

### *2.1 The related literature on experiential marketing and emotion*

Schmitt (1999a; 1999b) implies that, through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell, the SENSE module or SENSE marketing appeals to the senses to generate creative experiences. SENSE marketing can be used to identify industries and services, motivate customers and add value to

consumers (e.g., through aesthetics or excitement). Schmitt (1999a; 1999b) believes that FEEL marketing appeals to the inner feelings and emotions of consumers, intending to generate affective interactions ranging from slightly optimistic moods linked to a brand to intense emotions of happiness and pride. Strong feelings are the product of experiences and interactions, and they evolve. A customer accepts an optimistic feeling, followed by positive emotions in the consumption scenario.

Schmitt (1999a; 1999b) argues that THINK marketing calls on the intellect to construct cognitive, problem-solving interactions that creatively engage consumers. For a visitor to a science museum, for example, his exhibits and certain triggers activate emotions such as amazed, curious, fascinated, and inspired. Schmitt (1999a; 1999b) suggests that ACT marketing enriches the lives of visitors by targeting their physical experiences, showing them different ways of doing stuff, alternative behaviours and interactions. A well-designed experiential environment may remind their clients to think about their lifestyle or ways of doing stuff.

Schmitt (1999a; 1999b) argues that there are elements of SENSE, FEEL, THINK and ACT marketing in RELATE marketing. RELATE marketing, however, reaches beyond the intimate, private feelings of the individual, thereby linking the individual to something beyond his/her private state.

#### *2.2 The related literature on experiential quality and experiential satisfaction*

Customer quality appraisal shows a significant element in customer satisfaction. Previous studies focused primarily on the content of a product or service (Fornell, 1992), where the analysis considered the experience and indicated that experiential quality would contribute to experiential satisfaction.

#### *2.3 The related literature review of emotion and experiential satisfaction*

At the heart of all marketing activities is customer satisfaction (Machleit, 2001). Customer satisfaction assessment and management is essential for the sustainability, growth and success of service industries such as tourism (Sirakaya, 2004). In the tourism and travel industry, the satisfaction of visitors is essential to the effective marketing of destinations because it affects the choice of destination and the decision to return. In the sense of the tourism and travel industry, some efforts have also shown that emotion has a major influence on satisfaction.

#### *2.4 The related literature review of experiential satisfaction and revisit intention*

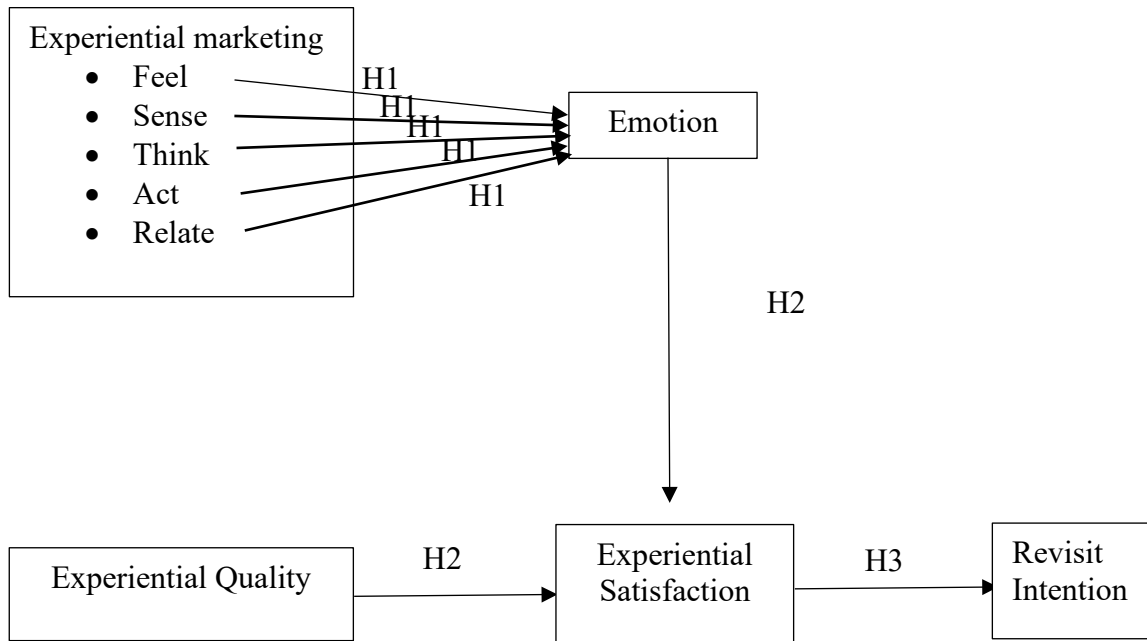
Marketing research has shown that the intention to revisit depends on the level of satisfaction of the consumer with their product or service experience. Then, the positive perception of tourists on their vacation would increase the likelihood of their purpose and willingness to revisit. Likewise, when visitors have more fun than they planned, most like to come back in the future instead of visiting another tourism location (Ross, 1993).

### **3. Conceptual Model**

The researcher applied the three previous studies and relevant theories to develop the new conceptual framework. The variables, experiential marketing (feel, sense, think, act, and relate, and emotion is taken from the study of “The Visitors Behavioral Consequences of Experiential Marketing: An Empirical Study on Taipei Zoo” to test the relationship between these two variables. Moreover, to study the relationship between experiential quality and satisfaction, the researcher applied the study of “The role of aesthetic experiential qualities for tourist satisfaction and loyalty”. Then, the researcher applied the study of “A Study of Revisit Intention:

Experiential Quality and Image of Muara Beting Tourism Site in Bekasi District.” to study the relationship of experiential quality, experiential satisfaction, and revisit intention. The conceptual framework used in this research is to investigate the factors that influence revisit intention by considering variables, which are consumer experiences with Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World.

**Figure 1:**  
*The Conceptual Framework*



**Hypothesis 1**

- H1o: Experiential marketing (Feel, Sense, Think, Act, Relate) has no statistical influence on emotion.
- H1a: Experiential marketing (Feel, Sense, Think, Act, Relate) statistically influences emotion.

**Hypothesis 2**

- H2o: Experiential quality and emotion do not statistically influence experiential satisfaction.
- H2a: Experiential quality and emotion statistically influence experiential satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 3**

- H3o: Experiential satisfaction does not statistically influence revisit intention.
- H3a: Experiential satisfaction statistically significant influence revisit intention.

**4. Research Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to determine the experiential marketing of an underground tourist attraction in Bangkok by using experiential quality, emotion, experiential satisfaction and revisit intention. To find out the research questions, this study applied the descriptive research method as it is used to evaluate which factor may or may not influence the other variables (Zikmund, 2003). The survey research technique is used to collect the primary data in this research. According to Zikmund (2003) and Cooper (2014) the use of questionnaires in descriptive research is an optimal way of gathering primary and raw data. This study used a



Likert Scale questionnaire and distributed it to respondents to collect data on the importance of respondents, views of respondents, and attitude.

In this study, the target populations were tourists who had experienced visiting Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World at Siam Paragon. Siam area is located in the center of Bangkok, the main tourist shopping district, and has the largest population of tourists. So, the researchers selected Siam Paragon and around the Siam area for collecting data from respondents.

The visitors' population of Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World at Siam Paragon in Bangkok is unknown. Therefore, the researchers determined the sample size by using the population proportion and distributed the questionnaire to respondents at Siam Paragon and around the Siam area in Bangkok, Thailand.

In this study, the researchers applied the questionnaires as the research instrument to collect the data for experiential marketing of an underground tourist attraction, Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World, Bangkok, Thailand. In this study, the questionnaire was divided into seven parts: screening questions, experiential marketing, experiential equality, emotion, experiential satisfaction, revisit intention, and demographic factors.

There is only one screening question whether the respondents have been visited Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World or not. Moreover, the five-point Likert scale is applied as 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= normal, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree for the other variables. The Likert scale is a descriptive rating scale consisting of statements that identify either a favourable or an unfavourable perception of the studied subject that will be answered by the respondents and is the common method because it is simple and easy to construct (Cooper, 2014).

## **5. Data Collection**

The questionnaires were distributed to customers drawn from the sampling procedure. The data were obtained from 400 respondents who had experienced of visiting in Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World. The data collected at a specified time from February 23, 2021 to March 10, 2021. The questionnaires were hand distributed on weekdays and weekends from 12.00 pm to 6.00 pm at around Siam Square One, Siam Centre, and Siam Paragon until the sample size was achieved. After the data collecting process, the researcher analysed all primary data by utilizing the Statistical program.

### *5.1 Finding*

According to the result of this study, the researchers found that 290 respondents were female (72.5%), which is higher than 110 females (27.5%). Then, the nationality of 245 respondents (61%) were Thai and 155 respondents (39%) were Foreigner customers. Moreover, 54% of the respondents were 21-30 years old, and the majority of the respondents are employee, accounting for 36% and the second most are students which have 35% of the respondent.

### *5.2 Hypothesis testing*

In this research, three hypotheses were analysed from objectives and research questions to study experiential marketing of an underground tourist attraction in Bangkok, Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World.

**Table 1:**  
*The Summary of Hypothesis Test Results*

Hypothesis	Level of Significance	Standardized Beta Coefficient Value	Result
H1o: Experiential marketing (Feel, Sense, Think, Act, Relate) has no statistical influence on emotion.			
Experiential marketing (Feel)	.025	.101	Rejected H1o
Experiential marketing (Sense)	.335	.044	Failed to reject H1o
Experiential marketing (Act)	.001	.283	Rejected H1o
Experiential marketing (Think)	.001	.415	Rejected H1o
Experiential marketing (Relate)	.002	.122	Rejected H1o
H2o: Experiential quality and emotion is not statistically significant influence on experiential satisfaction.			
Experiential quality	.001	.530	Rejected H2o
Emotion	.001	.429	Rejected H2o
H3o: Experiential satisfaction is not statistically significant influence on revisit intention.			
Experiential satisfaction	.001	.842	Rejected H3o

The data and information were collected from the visitors who have experienced with Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World. The sample size of this research is 400 respondents. The researchers applied non-probability sampling involving purposive and convenience sampling techniques to collect the data from the sampling units. The descriptive and inferential analysis is applied to test all research hypotheses based on both Simple and Multiple Linear Regression analysis.

According to the result of this study, the researchers found that 290 respondents were female (72.5%), and the nationality of 245 respondents (61%) were Thai, who are local visitors. Moreover, 54% of the respondents were 21-30 years old, and the majority of the respondents are employee, accounting for 36% and the second most are students which have 35% of the respondents. Regarding the research findings of hypothesis one, the researcher found that four of all five independent variables, which are experiential marketing (Feel, Think, Act, Relate) has a positive significant influence on emotion. However, experiential marketing (Sense) has no influence on emotion, and is failed to reject. According to the value of Beta coefficient ( $\beta$ )



obtained from the multiple regression analysis, the researcher found that experiential marketing (Feel, Think, Act, Relate) has a high positive significant influence on emotion.

Based on the findings of hypothesis two, the researcher found that two independent variables which are experiential quality and emotion have a positive significant influence on experiential satisfaction. According to the value of Beta coefficient ( $\beta$ ) obtained from the multiple regression analysis, the researcher found that experiential quality and emotion had the highest positive influence on experiential satisfaction. Along with the result of hypothesis three, the researcher found that experiential satisfaction has a positive significant influence on revisit intention. According to the value of Beta coefficient ( $\beta$ ) obtained from the simple regression analysis, the researcher found that experiential satisfaction has a high positive significant influence on revisit intention.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Nowadays, the development of tourism industry is reflected in an increasing demand of the population for an ever-increasing range of customer goods and services, a demand that stimulates manufacturing of host country and this leads to better economy of the country. The tourism sector is also related with social, political, cultural, and economic sector of the country. As consequence, if the tourism sector of the country is developing very well, it can help and implement other sectors of the country at the same time.

Along with the data analysis, the results can help the marketers and also the management team of Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World to understand the Thailand's tourism market and the customers' revisit intention. As to the research findings, the answers from the questionnaires of this research paper and based on the researchers' investigation, the researchers has made suggestions as follows:

As the result of the demographic factors, most of the visitors are over 20 years old female, who are employee. So, Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World can focus on the company employee when they do marketing. For example, the marketing team can do business to business collaboration with other company, like providing the discount coupon or special offer to those employee of that company. Moreover, they should attract more students visitors, as the population student is very high and the word of mouth, which lead to recommendation each other. Furthermore, Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World should prepare for the time after COVID (New Normal Life) as there might be many restricted rules for long run journey.

According to the result of Hypothesis 1, the researcher found that four independent variables among five ones, which are: Experiential marketing Feel (EMF), Experiential marketing Act (EMA), Experiential marketing Think (EMT), and Experiential marketing Relate (EMR), have a significant positive effect on customers' emotion with a visit to Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World in Bangkok. Moreover, the finding show the beta of experiential marketing (Think) is .415 and the highest one. However, Experiential marketing Sense (EMS) doesn't have a significant effect on emotion. Therefore, Sea Life Bangkok Ocean world need to improve to get the visitors' sense. It means to make sure to engage the destination, which are all decorations, with the sense of all customers.

Based on the investigation of hypothesis 2, the beta of experiential quality is .530 and strongly affected experiential satisfaction. Therefore, Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World should provide

pure natural environment, and make the visitors to explore about the underwater wildlife to attract more customers. Along with the result of hypothesis 3, the beta of experiential satisfaction is .342 and strongly influence on revisit intention. So, Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World should support to get engagement with customers and visitors' satisfaction to maintain the current customers and to attract more new visitors. Finally, according to the trends, most customers make purchasing decisions based on "What is invested" and "What is received," which causes consumers to be concerned about visiting a location.

### 6.1 Future Study

This study is designed to study the experiential marketing of an underground tourist attraction. The researcher focus on the population only in Thailand.

First of all, the researcher collected the data only from the people in Bangkok which cannot cover up the other areas in Thailand. If the researcher will change other geographical area in the future study, it may get a different results of the research. Secondly, the researcher applied quantitative analysis by using questionnaires in this study. In the future study, the researcher can apply qualitative or quantitative analysis with interview methods or secondary data to get different opinions, results, and analysis of this topic.

Finally, Covid-19 had many impact for this study. During these pandemic, many visitors of Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World were local tourists and few international tourists because of lockdown conditions. After these pandemic, many international tourists will come and visit Thailand. If the researcher will do these topic at that time, it will cover many international tourists and may affect the results of this study.

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